

# LONG ISLAND FORUM



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# THE LONG ISLAND FORUM

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FOR LONG ISLANDERS EVERYWHERE

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**PAUL BAILEY, Publisher-Editor**

*Contributing Editors*

Clarence A. Wood, LL.M., Ph.D.

Malcolm M. Willey, Ph.D.

John C. Huden, Ph.D.

MAY, 1950

## Old Stony Brook Hotel

I think you might be interested in a picture of the old Smith homestead and farmhouse before it was enlarged by my grandmother into the Stony Brook Hotel in the 50's of the last century. I know quite a little about it as it was owned by my father's family for several generations.

The picture of the old farmhouse is a copy of what, I am sure, is the only one in existence. It is taken from a badly broken glass plate. If you think it is interesting enough, I would like to have you publish it in the Forum.

The old homestead, or at least a part of it, was probably built by John Smith of Stony Brook on land granted him by the Town of Brookhaven in 1704. He was the son of Benjamin Smith and grandson of Arthur Smith, the Quaker, of Setauket. He served as a town trustee in 1738 and 1739. The property descended to his son, Henry Sr.; to Henry Jr., and then to Egbert who married Sarah Jane Nichol.

Egbert died in 1852 (May 15) and, soon afterward, his widow enlarged the old farmhouse and opened it as a boarding house and hotel. It was again enlarged and altered in 1874. The four sons of Egbert and Sarah Jane (Nichol) Smith—William Sydney, George Edwin, John Egbert and Thomas Brewster—all lived there and it was during their time that the hotel was sold out of the family.

The old family burial ground is still on the hill to the east and back of the hotel. The oldest stone bears the simple inscription: J+S++M+S, and marks the graves of John Smith and his wife, Mary, parents of the first Henry above mentioned.

Mary Edna Smith (Mrs. Wm. H.) Stony Brook.

Mrs. Smith is the daughter of the above George Edwin Smith.—Editor.

\*\*\*

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# Story of Westhampton Beach

**T**HERE is no written history of West Hampton or of Westhampton Beach, as far as I know. It really begins with the small group of persons who arrived from Massachusetts in 1640 and after considerable difficulty landed at North Sea, a few miles north of present Southampton village. There were about twelve families or 40 people in this group. They called themselves "undertakers" because they were undertaking the founding of a town.

With these first settlers came a minister, the Rev. Abraham Pierson, who acted not only as a spiritual advisor, but also as schoolmaster, scribe and lawmaker. These rugged individualists wanted a sound government for their new settlement and adopted a code of laws to provide for their civil, moral and religious behavior. These laws were very drastic but it is quite doubtful that the punishments prescribed therein were carried out.

By the year 1660, the settlement had been pretty well established and the time for expansion had arrived. One of the townsmen, by the name of Captain Thomas Topping, undertook what was probably the first major real estate deal in this part of the island. He bought from some Indians a tract of land, which started at Canoe Place and continued west to Seantuck Creek which is almost to Eastport Village, and still remains the boundary line between Southampton and Brookhaven Towns. This tract extended as far north as Peconic River, and was bounded on the south by the Bay. Quite a sizeable bit of acreage as you will note.

When the townsmen discovered what Captain Topping had done, they said, "Oh no, you can't get away with all this." Upon investigation,

*By Bea Rogers*

they found that the Indians from whom Captain Topping had made his purchase were not the rightful owners and so had no right to make the transfer. Therefore the deed which Captain Topping held was invalid and he could not claim ownership of the tract.

For several years a controversy of the conflicting claims went through their Courts un-

careed to pay for. There followed a great deal of trading in real estate; buying, selling and exchanging. Undoubtedly many people bought for speculation since the names of some of the early proprietors are not familiar in this locality.

The whole section was originally called Westhampton, probably because it was west of Southampton. It was also called the Qua Qua Purchase.



Howell Homestead, Now the Residence of William A. Gill. Here Daniel Webster Stayed. From Watercolor by Cyril A. Lewis.

til 1666 when it was referred to Governor Nicolls. He decided in favor of the townsmen who immediately took steps to purchase it from the rightful Indian owners. They paid seventy pounds, plus a few trinkets, for the same large tract of land. It might be noted that the original home of Captain Topping is now the Episcopal Rectory in Southampton Village.

Very soon, the whole section was surveyed and divided into lots which were called 50's. On appointed days there were drawings for these lots at Southampton, and anyone was permitted to draw as many lots as they

and sometimes the Quogue Purchase. There is still in existence a tract of land known as the Topping Purchase. This tract starts at Beaverdam and extends west to Seantuck Creek, bounded on the north by Peconic River and south by the bay.

How Captain Topping happened to retain this much of his original purchase is not recorded, but he probably bought it at one of the lot drawings. The titles to this property are still quite involved, and at the time of the Second World War, when the Government bought property for its Air Base, there was considerable difficulty in get-

ting clear title to some of the lots which came within the "Topping Purchase."

During the summer, it was the custom for Southampton farmers to drive their herds of cattle to this section and allow them to graze on the meadows. It is quite probable that some houses or cabins were built where the people in charge of the herds camped during the summer. There are evidences of this in some places of the village. It seems to me, although I am not sure, that the small wing on the north side of the Thurston Raynor house may have been the original home of the people who were spending the summer in that section.

Of course, when the owners decided to take up their permanent residence here they built larger and more spacious homes, and often incorporated the first and smaller parts into the new building. The Thurston Raynor house is one of the finest examples of the early farm house to be found in the eastern part of Long Island. I have traveled considerably, looking for old houses to photograph, and this one is among the very few I have found which has the original shingles on four sides. Needless to say, the shingles are very weather worn and thin, and will not last much longer, and it is very sad to think that this old house will not be with us for many more years. Approaching it from the south, the fine, simple and dignified lines make it really beautiful.

The Howell Homestead at Westhampton Beach, now owned and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. William Gill, was

built in 1727. It was in this house that P. T. Barnum and family once made their summer home.

The Foster homestead at

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A limited number of sets of the Long Island History, compiled by Paul Bailey and published last year by the Lewis Historical Publishing Company of New York, has been made available through the Long Island Forum at one-third off the publishers' price.

This drastic reduction from the original price of \$46.50 is made possible by eliminating volume 3 which consists entirely of biographical sketches.

Volumes 1 and 2 comprise the complete History as compiled by Editor Bailey and written by leading authorities in every field, consisting of more than 1000 pages, 43 chapters and 200 illustrations.

These handsomely printed and bound deluxe books (size 8x10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches) will be sent, while they last, in the same order that applications are received. Price \$30.

Besides the complete history of the island, from its discovery, including chapters on geo-

logy and archaeology, there are separate chapters on each of the towns in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, the history of the leading church denominations, whaling, fishing, shell fisheries, agriculture, medicine, banking, education, aviation and many other subjects.

Long Island Birdlife is compiled by Edwin Way Teale, nationally known authority; the island's mammals, by Dr. W. J. Hamilton, Cornell zoologist. The most extensive coverage of the island's Indians ever printed was prepared by John H. Morice. Among the authors represented are J. Russel Sprague, Dr. Oscar G. Darlington, Dr. Clarence Ashton Wood, Miss Jacqueline Overton, Rev. John K. Sharp, Chester R. Blakelock, Osborn Shaw, Herbert F. Ricard, Preston R. Bassett, Robert R. Coles, Halsey B. Knapp, Nancy Boyd Willey, Mary E. Bell—in all more than forty such authorities.

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## Night Herons of Flushing

**I**T IS A matter of surprise that many people in Flushing know so little of its black-crowned night herons. Some are not even aware that these birds have lived here a quarter century or longer. This fact is due neither to the herons' lack of dimensions nor illusive-ness, for their full height is about 2 feet and during their sojourn here they are usually in residence by day.

The full-fledged bird is really lovely with his glistening black back and silvery face, body, wings, and tail. An acquaintance of mine who examined a sick one reported that the black crown is a single soft feather. Another close observer told me that what I thought a tuft of white feathers wafted by a breeze over a heron's head is also a single feather, quite long and tipped by a small one. The bill about 3 inches in length is especially sharp for spearing fish which the heron trails in shallow water. The bird's eyes are red, clear and bright as a boy's marble.

No ornithologist myself, I have depended for scientific data on "A Field Guide to Birds" by Roger Tory Peterson with whose permission I quote therefrom. This book lists 10 herons and informs us that the adult black-crowned night heron is "the only one that is black-backed and pale gray or white; wings gray." While immature, it is "brown, spotted and streaked with white." This latter coloring blends so perfectly with tree bark that when these birds are hunched close to a limb I never detect them simultaneously y but always one by one.

"A Field Guide to Birds" describes our heron as "chunky, rather short-legged". When standing like a sentry on a tree's topmost branch, silhouetted against a blue sky, his yellow legs appear longer

By *Marian F. Overton*

than when pressed against his body in his somewhat cumbersome flight.

This variety of heron breeds from the Gulf of Mexico and Florida to east Quebec and south Manitoba. Although they build huge disheveled nests high in our trees, there is no evidence of their breeding in Flushing. For the winter a few seek southern New Eng-

to toleration. This is open Sundays, Tuesdays, and Saturdays in the afternoon.

Then the weeping beech on the grounds of the house of the same name is just a step along the lane from the Quaker homestead. Singularly valued by the Department of Parks, the tree is enclosed by a heavy chain. According to a notice, it is "believed to be the first of its variety to be planted in the Western Hem-



Seven of Flushing's Famous Herons. Photo by Sylvia C. Bergel.

land and sometimes are found in Ohio in addition to New York.

Should you contemplate a trip to Flushing to visit our herons you will find them so conveniently located that in one afternoon you can in a sense kill 3 birds with one stone. That is if you inspect them from beneath the branches of our historic weeping beech. (The other trees they frequent are actually within the vicinity.)

In Bowne Street near Fox Lane you would naturally stop first at the Bowne House built in 1661 by John Bowne and now preserved as a memorial

isphere." Probably a mere slip when brought from Belgium in 1847 by Samuel Parsons, it rises today over 60 feet with a circumference of 14 feet and a spread of 85. It is indeed worth coming a distance to see regardless of its feathered occupants.

The herons arrive in Flushing with snappy autumnal weather. From then on until the mild days of spring they live in this lovely beech, a few other weeping beeches grouped on a lawn in 38th Avenue, and at least one in Northern Boulevard in addition to a few evergreens in the

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## Forum

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our natural resources. We have many natural resources here on the north shore of Long Island: salt water beaches, rolling hills, trees, wildflowers and birds. State and local park authorities are protecting and developing our beaches, garden clubs are making us conscious of the necessity of protecting trees and flowers, but today there are few organizations on Long Island interested in protecting and studying birds. There are, however, many individuals interested in our feathered friends.

In order to give them an opportunity to meet each other and give all others interested in birds an opportunity to meet with them, a group of bird lovers plan to start an Audubon Club in the territory on the north shore of Suffolk County.

In this district are many species of water fowl and land birds. It is in the flyway of spring and fall migrating birds. Thousands of them stop off to feed; many stay to nest. Our winter birds are a joy to all who have observed them.

On Thursday, May 25, at 8 P.M., there will be an open meeting at the Stony Brook Museum on Christian Ave., east of the shopping circle. Mr. Carl W. Buchheiser, an outstanding naturalist, will tell us some of his experiences with birds, a short but interesting bird motion picture will be shown and an open discussion will follow.

All are welcome. There will be no charge, light refreshments will be served after the meeting.

True bird lovers will not want to miss this opportunity of meeting other bird observers in this district. Those desirous of learning more about our birds will benefit and anyone who wants to spend a pleasant evening will find it worthwhile.

Edward A. Lapham, Stony Brook

Mr. Lapham is widely known for his contributions to the Forum and for his excellent book, "Stony Brook Secrets", Editor.

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## Reminders

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# The Lloyds of Lloyds Neck

SOME time ago I wrote of the romance of Grizzell Sylvester of Shelter Island whose lover, Latimor Sampson, upon sailing for Barbadoes, left her his Long Island real estate including Horse Neck. From that voyage Sampson never returned but died while away. Seven years later, in 1686, Grizzell married James Lloyd of Boston and the same year Governor Thomas Dongan issued a patent erecting on Horse Neck, later renamed Lloyds Neck, the Manor of Queens Village.

It is from the "Papers of the Lloyd Family", published by the New York Historical Society, that I have gleaned the following information. As home building is such a burning question today it is interesting to note from these papers the cost of constructing a house in 1686 for one of Mr. Lloyd's tenants, John Gray by name. For 3000 boards and 5500 shingles the cost was 5 lbs. 11s and 6p. Shipped to Lloyds Neck from Boston, the freight amounted to 2 lbs. 8s.

Ten thousand nails in 4 sizes cost 41s; 12 feet of window glass, 11s; door hinges, 4s 6p; bricks, 5 lbs. 14s; brickmaker, 6s; making chimney, 3 lbs. 14s; mantle tree, 11s; bricks and rume for mason, 2s; carpentering frame and finishing, 15 lbs. Extra help for raising the house cost 6s while the smith's bill for ironwork was 2 lbs. 15s. One item reads: "Carrying brix and frame from Seatacut which was great imprudence (I.A.), 6 lbs. 10s." I. A. stood for Isaac Arnold who was probably Mr. Lloyd's man of business. The entire cost of the house was 59 lbs. 6s 3p "in country pay".

When James Lloyd died in 1693 "a true and perfect inventory" was made of the estate. I always thought that early fireplaces had no mantels, yet I find listed in this inventory 19 pieces of earthen,

By Kate W. Strong

stone and glass on the "mantelpiece". And what do you suppose was meant by a "gentlewoman & her son, valued at 6p?" A slave was listed at 30 lbs. Incidentally, a slave named Odium ran away with a horse and upon being caught was hired out for two years, either as punishment or to get rid of him.

Many details were given in the inventory as, for instance, "pr. childrens hose, moth eaten" and mink skins "out of season". Strangely enough, I find pocketbooks and white crepe described as "damified" but can't imagine why. I also found bills for the care of the Lloyd children, such as for cutting hair, drawing teeth, knitting stockings, etc. One item was for knitting a single stocking for Henry, which makes me wonder how the youth came to need only one.

A remedy listed for the children was "worms and rubarb" which probably was not popular with the youngsters. Daughter Grizzell, it seems, was somewhat hard on her shoes as annoyance is expressed at having to buy her six pairs.

Some of the Lloyd offspring lived in Boston as the following letter, evidently written by a neighbor there, shows:

"Mr. Francis Brinley, Boston, August 12, 1703: The neighborhood where I dwell are going to pave the Street. I send this to know your pleasure whether I shall pave before the land belonging to Mr. Lloyd's children. It is one of the dirtiest places in the whole Towne and if they pave and I do not, they will turne all their water upon me that there will be no living. It runs into our Sellar and over flows them." There is no record of the request being granted.

## Night Herons of Flushing

Continued from Page 85

rear yard of the Congregational Church.

I was told that in the fall a lone heron alights in the historic weeping beech prior to the coming of his entourage, as if to ascertain that all is in readiness. One of the birds also remains in the spring for a time, perhaps to round up stragglers or the inexperienced young that might be left behind. Nights too when the herons are fishing in Flushing Bay or its environs a sentinel is sometimes stationed in that tree.

There are actually fewer of these birds in Flushing than previously. One of my informants attributes this to the building of La Guardia Airport. Another living close to



Great Black Crowned Heron  
Photo by Sylvia C. Bergel

the beeches in 38th Avenue believes that the numbers decreased there when the refuse heaps beside our L. I. Railroad (a choice feeding ground)

were disrupted by the New York World's Fair. Notwithstanding this numerical decline, a host of herons comes back each year.

I inquired about the nightly departure and early morning return of the birds and learned that, except for occasional afternoon flights when aroused by a plane or intrusion on the ground below, they generally await dusk before setting forth. Only one bird stirs at first, stretches a bit, spreads its wings, and is up in the air with a farewell "Quawk!" One at a time the others depart in like manner.

The early morning reappearance of the herons was described as most eerie. There is first a din of flapping wings in the air followed by much confusion and disturbance as each bird fussily selects his own position in the tree before settling down to the quiet of another day.

This observer gave me another item. Occasionally, not often, on the ground beneath the beeches she has discovered a few small fish.

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## Story of Westhampton Beach

Continued from page 84

Westhampton Beach is of unknown age but was first occupied by a Foster—Josiah by name—in 1835. Here he raised a family of seven children. He was descended from Christopher Foster of Southampton. It is now the home of Josiah's granddaughter, Miss Augusta S. Meeker, former village librarian.

When Westhampton Beach was first settled, it was like ancient Gaul, divided into three parts. The eastern part, which started at about Turkey Bridge and extended west to what is now Library Avenue, was called Ketchaboneck. The earlier spelling of this is Catchaponack. Again, it is sometimes spelled Ketchponack. It is an Indian name which means — a place where large roots grow. It is said that there was a type of large root growing in the swamps here which the Indians used for food.

The next section of the town was called Potunk, which began at Library Avenue and extended west to the little Creek west of the present Golf Club House. Further to the west, the section was called Oneck; sometimes spelled Onock; and also Onunk. The first Ketchaboneck section was owned and first occupied by the Howells and the Raynors. The Potunk section had been purchased and occupied by the Stevens and the Jessups. The Oneck section was owned and home established by the Halsey family.

Parts of these sections are still owned by descendants of the original settlers. The only exception is Oneck, no part of which now is owned by the Halsey family. Very often when I am riding on the street which goes through the Stevens' property, south of and parallel to Main Street, and see Ed Stevens' herd of cows

pastured in the lot at the south of that road, I am reminded that the Stevens family have been using this for pasture lands for the last three hundred years, and here we are seeing one thing of the town that we may have been able to see three hundred years ago. Eventually, all three sections became known as Ketchaponeck.

When the railroad was put through here about 1880, the first post office was established in the store of E. H. Bishop and Ketchaponeck changed its name to Westhampton Center. Another

September through December. The first teacher was Jared Gardiner, who received ten pounds for his services. There were 42 pupils registered, but the records show that all of these did not take full advantage of their opportunity for education. The first school building stood on Potunk Lane, just north of Main Street, but that soon proved to be too small and was moved to the rear of the Jessup Homestead where it was used as a wood house.

The second school stood on Main Street at about the present site of the home and office



Thurston Raynor Homestead. Photo 1947 by Bea Rogers.

change followed in 1891, when Westhampton Center became Westhampton Beach. There had been a post office at Beaverdam for many years, where the people of this community received their mail. It was the custom for one of the men to ride to Beaverdam and collect the mail for everyone in Catchaponack. It was brought down to the Old Jessup Homestead on the corner of Main Street and Potunk Lane, where it was put in small boxes in a closet under the stairs. From there the letters were called for by the various residents. This was really the first post office, but quite unofficial.

The first school of which there is any record here was in 1795-1796, with sessions from

of Dr. E. J. C. Smith. This school was built flush with the street so that when the pupils came out of the door they stepped directly onto the highway. Again this second school proved to be too small as the village began to grow. During the late 1800's a new school was built on Mill Road opposite and slightly to the west of the Gould Building. This school served until 1902 at which time the Beaverdam and Westhampton districts were consolidated and the new school was built at the Six Corners. The Mill Road School was purchased by Mr. Mortimer D. Howell, moved down the street, and made into a home which is now occupied in the summer by Christopher Richardson.

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## Forum

Continued From Page 86

I still enjoy your publication very much. George J. Smith, Freeport.

\* \* \*

## Brooklyn In The Gay Nineties

Fifty-four years ago all that part of Brooklyn south of Prospect Park and Greenwood Cemetery was as rural, perhaps even more so than many parts of Nassau and Suffolk Counties are today. Small groups of houses here and there, single farmhouses surrounded by a wide expanse of farmland and patches of forest made a pleasing picture. Some of that rural atmosphere still lingers in the tree shaded streets of New Utrecht and Gravesend. A newspaper cut of a scene in 1892 pasted in my scrap book is a constant reminder of how that country looked when I first saw it in 1896.

It is not, however, of the landscape, pleasing to the eye as it was then, that I wish to tell, but rather of the many small steam railroads that ran through that section from the ferries on Brooklyn's western shore to the beaches of Manhattan, Brighton, and Coney Island, and also to the racetracks of The Coney Island Jockey Club at Sheepshead Bay, and The Brooklyn Jockey Club at Gravesend.

The railroads that I remember were The Brooklyn Bath and West End, or as it was once called, The Brooklyn Bath and Coney Island R. R.; The Sea Beach R.R.; The Brighton Beach R.R.; The Prospect Park and Coney Island R.R.; and the Manhattan Beach, and Bay Ridge divisions of The Long Island Railroad. The Canarsie R.R., although not serving the same section, ran from East New York to Canarsie.

The engines on those roads, while small, were somewhat larger than the ones in use on the elevated roads of the city, and many of them were

Continued on next page

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## Forum

Continued from page 90

very speedy. The cars used in summer, except on the Manhattan Beach trains of the L.I.R.R., were of the open type with seats all the way across the car, canvas curtains to keep out some of the rain, and a running board on the outside the whole length of the car.

In the summers of 1896-7 I was serving as a fireman on the L.I.R.R., much of the time on Manhattan Beach trains running out of Flatbush Ave., on Manhattan Beach and Sheepshead Bay race trains out of Bay Ridge, and on the Prospect Park and Coney Island R. R. The P.P. & C.I. then a subsidiary of the L.I.R.R. ran from the north side of Greenwood Cemetery at 9th Ave. and 20th St., to Coney Island.

Manhattan Beach with two large hotels, The Manhattan Beach and The Oriental, a bathing beach, bicycle racetrack, theatre, and Paine's fireworks, was at the peak of its fame as a beach resort, and was one of the chief interests of Austin Corbin, President of The Long Island Railroad, who had a summer home at Babylon.

Trains to Manhattan Beach left Long Island City and Brooklyn at regular intervals all day and evening, and in the evening hours they were heavily loaded. The locomotives running out of Brooklyn burned hard coal in large lumps requiring considerable skill to fire because it could not be put into the furnace while the throttle was open without reducing the steam pressure. Many an evening returning from the beach with a heavy train I would step down to the deck at East New York station, and as the train pulled away would open the furnace door slightly, place the latch in a notch provided for the purpose and hold it there until we got over the hill at Saratoga Ave. That was done to prevent the heavy exhaust from tearing holes in the fire and thus lowering the steam pressure. As we went over the hill I would close the door and go back to my seat to assist in watching track and signals.

Another interesting experience on the Manhattan Beach line was racing with Brighton Beach trains.

Continued on next page

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## Long Island Forum Index

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## Forum

Continued From Page 91

From Manhattan Beach Junction to Sheepshead Bay their tracks ran close beside ours, and when one of their speedy little engines came alongside of us the temptation was too great to resist, although not in accord with good railroad practice. Needless to say that the Brighton engines often won.

Trains from Bay Ridge ferry to the Coney Island Jockey Club racetrack at Sheepshead Bay would often lay on a siding at the track, and by standing on top of the tender we could look over the fence, but little good it did us for we were too far away to tell one horse from another or which one won.

The stations on the Manhattan Beach line south of East New York, as I remember them, were Ford's Corners (later Pugby), Kowenhoven, Flatlands (later Vanderveer Park), Manhattan Beach Junction, Kings Highway, Neck Road, Sheepshead Bay and Manhattan Beach. At Manhattan Beach the tracks were extended eastward to the Oriental Hotel, and there was also a short stretch of track between the Manhattan Beach and the Brighton Beach Hotels over which a two-car train ran at frequent intervals.

Manhattan Beach Junction was so named because it was there that the line from Bay Ridge ferry joined the Manhattan Beach line from L. I. City and Brooklyn. These tracks are still in use, having been electrified, and some parts placed in cuts or tunnels. Freight crossing New York Bay to float-bridges at Bay Ridge, is made up into trains which are pulled over these tracks by electric locomotives to New England points via the Hell Gate Bridge.

Some of the South Brooklyn railroads that I have mentioned run near the L.I.R.R. or The P.P. & C.I. R.R., and we often saw their trains.

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## Snowbound in Blizzard of '88

**T**HIS is the account of a L.I.R.R. train becoming snowbound at Waverly, on the main line, in the famous blizzard of March 12, 1888, when it took six days and five nights to go from Greenport to Brooklyn.

David P. Horton, who described his experience in *The Long Island Traveler* for March 25, 1888, was a resident of Southold and a direct descendant of Barnabas Horton who came from England and settled in that town in 1640. Being a music teacher in the public schools of Brooklyn from 1856 to the 1890's, during a considerable portion of which time he resided in Southold, he was a well known rider on the railroad between the east and west ends of the island.

I am indebted to my good friend, Mrs. May Horton Hummel, a surviving daughter of Mr. Horton, for the use of this story, and I knew Mr. Horton well, being one of his pupils in public school No. 15 in Brooklyn in the early 1880's. I hope that some survivors of the unusual trip which Mr. Horton describes may see this article in the Forum.

### Mr. Horton's Account

When the Greenport express started Monday morning, March 12, 1888 there was but little wind and rain. At Southold snow began to be seen, which increased as we went west, so that the train was blocked sixty rods east from the Waverly station and the fury of the storm was greater than that of "1866 and 1867".

Conductor Reeves sent brakeman Wiggins to Medford, two and a half miles east, and with track master Forbes, brakeman Hempstead, the veteran Heitzman and his fireman, he put out for Ronkonkoma, but the engine could get no further than Holbrook.

*By Rensville Selleck Smith*

Reeves and Hempstead pushed on to Ronkonkoma and were nearly exhausted when they reached there.

Meanwhile the passengers all found shelter in the smoking car, and good naturedly made the best of the situation. The number included Ex-Sheriff Griffing, County Treasurer Perkins, Ex-Treasurer Newins, J. Edward Wells, James Richards, Rev. Brockington,

ing car until Tuesday morning. Mr. Richards had with him a basket of eggs which he boiled and generously gave to the hungry passengers, and so he will be of grateful memory. A few crackers were obtainable, and at evening a limited number of poor sandwiches at 5c a piece met with ready sale.

By the efforts of Messrs. Newins and Perkins and the Baggage Master, the fires were replenished so that there



Old Post Office, Middle Island

George W. Dayton, J. C. Wells, Peter Hazzard, Jake Brown, F. W. Lupton and daughter (7 years old), Josie Gurings, Mr. Van Tuyle and little son, officer Shadbole, Sergeant Ashton of Brooklyn Police, Captain Penney, Captain Harris, H. B. Kistler (of Allentown, Pa.), "The Doctor" Printer Williams of the "News", Engineers Munch, Staalk and Sullivan, John L. Clark and news agent Walsh.

All day and night the storm raged so fearfully we could hardly venture outside the car. Messrs. J. C. Wells and Parke succeeded in getting to Mrs. Blummer's, across opposite the station, but all the others remained in the smok-

ing car until Tuesday morning. Mr. Richards had with him a basket of eggs which he boiled and generously gave to the hungry passengers, and so he will be of grateful memory. A few crackers were obtainable, and at evening a limited number of poor sandwiches at 5c a piece met with ready sale.

About noon Sergeant Ashton started for Ronkonkoma and reached there with great difficulty. Soon after, Road Master Forbes arrived with orders to care for the passengers at the Company's ex-



pense, and he put the seats in place for comfortable sleeping. Mrs. Blummer also did all in her power and at evening there was a "candy pull" in the kitchen with a crowded house.

Wednesday the storm broke, and Forbes started for more provisions, which he luckily found in the cozy farm house of Uncle Will Riker, a short way northeast from the cars, hidden by the trees. Uncle Will had not heard of the block, but with the aid of his excellent wife and her mother (Grandmother Terry, in her 89th year), a sumptuous breakfast was furnished at an hour's notice! And in this pleasant home a goodly number were fed and lodged until the break-up.

On Wednesday Mr. Reeves returned and told of the perilous trip to Ronkonkoma. Provisions were scarce there and the train men were obliged to carry wood some distance on their backs for the engine. Efforts were made to get to Patchogue but the snow was too deep. Then Mr. Lupton with his daughter, J. C. Wells, Mr. Parke and Jake Brown started by way of Medford, where they procured a team, placed the little girl on the sleigh with the driver, and the gentlemen went in advance of the horses.

Capt. Penney, Mr. Clarke and Capt. Harris also made a laborious passage across from Waverly. Friday morning Mr. Dayton, Rev. Mr. Brockington and others went by way of Medford. Saturday morning the Company sent parties with transportation for all to Patchogue. Messrs. Perkins, Newsins, Wells and Hazzard had taken an early start for Riverhead by way of Patchogue and Westhampton.

Just before noon the five remaining passengers left on a two-horse sleigh, preceded by four stalwart men with shovels and axes and were just in time for the two o'clock train going west. The most unfortunate one was mail agent McCarty, who was taken very

ill on Tuesday evening and continued to suffer not a little, but remaining at his post. He was persuaded on Saturday to move to Mrs. Blummer's, where he received kindly care.

Thus closed the five days tarrying at Waverly, during

which not a few were often led to say "Oh Lord, we thank Thee that it is as well with us as it is." Conductor Reeve and his men did all in their power for the passengers' comfort, and everybody abounded with kindly feeling.

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# Island's Part in World Aviation

PART VIII

PRESTON R. BASSETT

*President, Nassau County Historical Society*

In 1929 the City of New York had become dissatisfied with Newark Airport as the terminal for its air mail and air passengers. It had made a strong bid to relocate its air terminal at the western end of Jamaica Bay, including Barren Island and the surrounding marshland. After a tremendous job of pumping in 14 million cubic yards of sand and leveling it off, a splendid airport was produced at the southern end of Flatbush Avenue. Large hangars and a fine administration building were erected. The field was dedicated on May 23, 1931, with great ceremony and named Floyd Bennett Field. The airlines, however, could not see the economy of moving over from Newark and consequently this fine new airport awaited with some uncertainty its future. The Navy moved into a part of it. The Coast Guard, the Aviation Section of the New York Police Department, several flying schools and airplane maintenance companies filled the spacious hangars. But it was not long in finding fame which out-shone even Newark Airport, that over-worked old terminal which it was built to replace. Such fine facilities and long, wide runways without the confusion of heavy scheduled air traffic were ideal for special flights.

The spotlight that had illuminated Roosevelt Field during the late 1920s suddenly swung over onto the glistening runways of Floyd Bennett. On July 28, 1931, by coincidence, two Bellanca airplanes were poised to take off on great flights. In the first one, Russell Boardman and John Polando were set to try for a new

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*Curtiss Navy Racer with "Casey" Jones, Curtiss test pilot, winner of the 1921 Pulitzer Prize; built at Garden City*

## Forum

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The Canarsie R.R. was then owned by a family named Warner, one of whom, John Warner, worked with me in the L.I.R.R. shops in 1898.

Manhattan Beach was still a famous resort in 1906 for I took my girl there that summer. We do not remember the play then at the theatre, but the spectacle at Paine's Fireworks was "The Destruction of Pompeii." It opened with a care-free throng strolling along the shore. Soon faint rumblings came from the mountain back of them and as they gazed anxiously at

Continued on back cover

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## Island's Part in World Aviation

Continued from Page 95

non-stop distance record. They took off and flew eastward on a great circle course for Turkey, 50 hours and 8 minutes later they landed at Istanbul after flying 5011 miles. It was a new world record.

The second plane, with Clyde Pangborn and Hugh Herndon, took off the same day in an attempt to beat the Post-Gatty round-the-world record. They made fast time to Croyden Airport, London, and through Europe and Russia. They were, however, arrested in Japan for flying over Japanese fortifications. After their release they flew on across the Pacific back to the United States, but it was October 15th before they got back.

On July 5, 1932, two more intrepid pilots took off from Floyd Bennett for another try at the Post-Gatty record. James Mattern and Bennett Griffin made the try in their Lockheed Vega *Century of Progress*. They got as far as Minsk, where they crashed on a take-off and had to abandon the flight.

Mattern, however, went right to work to try it again and on June 3, 1933, we find him again taking off from Floyd Bennett Field, this time alone. He got as far as Anadyr, Siberia, where he made a forced landing in the vast uninhabited huskies and was lost for over three weeks. Coast Guard surface craft and Russian rescue planes searched the bleak Arctic Circle for him. He was

Continued on Page 97

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### Seen At The Riverside Church

The convertible date dress shown here was one of the spring-into-summer fashions presented at the Hotel Waldorf Astoria last month and repeated by request for the Epicures Club in a recent style show given by the Traphagen School of Fashion at the Riverside Church, New York. This smartly simple dress of rosy wine nylon matelasse taffeta has a flesh-colored sheer



nylon vestee which may be removed to bare the sweetheart neckline. Then add a bunch of flowers at the belt and the costume takes on a definitely festive air. As a warm weather fashion it is ideal since this attractive puckered nylon fabric by Mullinson is washable and will dry fresh and crisp as new with no ironing. Designed by Carol Vanderclock, Traphagen student who modeled it for the photographer, the dress was made in the school's Clothing Department.

## Island's Part in World Aviation

Continued from Page 96

found just in time by some Eskimos as he was floating himself down a river on a raft, almost starved.

While Mattern was still lost in Siberia, Floyd Bennett Field was honored by a visit of the largest and most colorful air armada that ever came to the United States. Twenty-four large, twin-fuselaged Savoia Marchetti seaplanes under the command of General Balbo of Italy, stopped off for several days to pay their respects to New York. They were on their way from Orbetello, Italy, to the Century of Progress at Chicago. The brilliant red-white-and-green airplanes attracted much attention and many sightseers thronged Floyd Bennett Field.

In one corner of the Field at this very time, but unnoticed by the crowd, was a familiar white airplane being groomed for another flight. Some new apparatus was being installed on the *Winnie Mae*. Wiley Post had not been satisfied with his first trip around the world. He was anxious to try it again in an attempt to beat his own record. This time, however, he wanted to do it alone.

The greatest problem was the element of human endurance. He knew that at Sperry's in Brooklyn a new design of an automatic pilot was almost perfected. If he could have that automatic as his co-pilot he could do the trick. It was finally arranged and the first model of the modern automatic gyro-pilot was hastened to completion, and it was this that was being quietly installed down at Floyd Bennett Field. After careful tests, Wiley was ready to take off. On July 15, 1933, he started from Floyd Bennett Field with only a few friends and well wishers to see him off. He encountered all kinds of weather, but with the automatic pilot as

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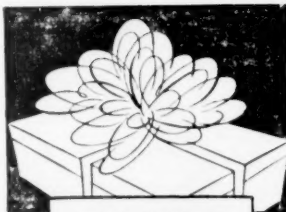
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## Island's Part in World Aviation

Continued From Page 97

relief, he kept pushing ahead at a terrific pace with a minimum of time spent on the ground to refuel and catch some sleep. Wiley found that on the stretches where the weather was good he could even take short naps while the gyropilot kept him steadied on his course. During the evening of July 21st, Post's progress on his final dash across the United States from Edmonton was broadcast hourly and thousands drove down to Floyd Bennett Field from miles around to witness his arrival. At one minute before midnight the white plane landed and rolled to a stop in front of the administration building amid floodlights and police desperately trying to hold back the crowds. As Wiley climbed out, he was greeted with the greatest ovation ever given to a flyer on Long Island. He had made a new record of 7 days, 18 hours and 49 minutes.

This was the last of the great flights which stirred the imagination of the public. Other long flights occasionally took off from Floyd Bennett during the next few years, but they were news only for the day and most of them have since been forgotten.

Codos and Rossi, two French aviators, took off from Floyd Bennett in their plane, the *Joseph Le Brie*, on August 5, 1933, and flew non-stop to Rayak, Syria, a distance of 5657 miles, a new record.

Dick Merrill and Harry Richman took off from the same field in September, 1936, for a round trip to London. Although completed, it was marred by forced landings, so in May, 1937, Merrill tried it again with Jack Lambie. This trip was undertaken to tie in with the coronation in London. Air mail was carried over to London and five days later, photographs of the coronation ceremonies were flown back to Floyd Bennett Field. The trip was the first commercial round trip of an airplane across the Atlantic.

In August, four Germans in a Focke Wulf Condor flew from Berlin to Floyd Bennett Field and a few days later flew back to Berlin. It was getting commonplace.

In 1938 there was one more stunt flight from Long Island which might well be mentioned as closing the amateur era. A young fellow named Douglas Corrigan took clearance from Floyd Bennett Field one day for California. Nothing was heard from him, however, until twenty-four hours later when word arrived from Ireland that he had landed at Dublin. He nonchalantly stated that he guessed he had gone the wrong way. He was dubbed "Wrong Way" Corrigan. The public was delighted. In it they saw the end of long-distance stunt flying. It was now too easy.

Corrigan did not realize how well he had timed his little joke. Next year, on June 24, 1939, the Pan American Airways inaugurated the first regular transatlantic airmail service. Pilot Harold Gatty flew the Yankee Clipper from Port Washington, Long Island, to Southampton, England.

Transatlantic flying without missing a step moved smoothly from the exciting days of stunts to the routine business of the great airlines. Long Island has remained the western focal point of this great airpath from the days of the NC4 to the present days of heavy transatlantic traffic at LaGuardia Field.

To be continued

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## Forum

Continued From Page 95

Vesuvius, the rumblings increased in intensity, sparks began to fly from the crater until the climax, when the top of the mountain blew off while the terrified populace fled amid falling scenery.

I am glad that the B.M.T. has preserved the names of some of those old railroads of "The Gay Nineties", for when I stand on one of their subway platforms and trains pass bearing such signs as "Brighton Local; Sea Beach Ex; West End Ex;" I am reminded of scenes that I will never again witness.

John Teoker, Babylon

\* \* \*

### Nassau's Famous Seed Grower

Can someone tell me the name of the famous French or Belgian seed grower who had his farm in what is now Levittown, Nassau County, somewhere around 1908 or 1910? My father, Hal B. Fullerton, who operated the L.I.R.R. experimental farm near Medford, considered the cauliflower and sprout seeds grown by this man among the best.

Mrs. Joseph Zarensky,  
cure of L. I. Forum.

\* \* \*

### Saw Paulhan Flight

On March 13, 1910 at the Jamaica racetrack, Louis Paulhan gave Long Islanders and New Yorkers their first view of a REAL flight by an airplane taking off from the island. Ten thousand persons were there, myself included, and the first Gnome motor in the United States (a revolving cylinder job) was used. Plane and aviator were both French. He made two great flights that day, one as an encore.

As I remember it, there was some delay due to a U. S. Marshal seizing the plane as an infringement on a Wright patent. Nevertheless, they permitted the take off.

John Good, Garden City.

\* \* \*

In reference to Julian Denton Smith's fine story in the March Forum entitled "Eel Grass Comes Back," I recall when a sailboat could not move in some parts of Great South Bay in a light wind unless somebody stood at the bow and pushed aside the floating eel grass which we commonly called seaweed. In many a sailing race, as a small boy I was employed to lie over the bow to tear away the grass that accumulated at the waterline.

Horace A. Verity,  
King's Bridge.

\* \* \*

The article in the March Forum by Mrs. Currie-Bell absorbed my attention especially both because I had the pleasure of meeting her last summer at Southold and saw at least the outside of Custer Institute.

(Miss) Marion F. Overton,  
Flushing.

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